Nothing could have prepared me for the long wait to celebrate the 104th AATSP Annual Conference in Puerto Rico! After the false start provided by the pandemic, the 500-year-old City of San Juan and the iconic Caribe Hilton Hotel await us. ¡Bienvenidos a todos! Bem-vindos a todos!

The conference is shaping up to be one of our largest in the last decade. We welcome novice and veteran teachers of all levels to inspire each other during our time together. I want to acknowledge all AATSP members for your patience and generosity. I value the trust that you have placed in us--the AATSP Board of Directors and the Staff--as we have been navigating in uncharted waters since 2020. So, as we sail into the Bahía de San Juan on July 9-12 for our conference, we are joyous!

The spectacular Puerto Rican context will provide the backdrop to what I hope will be one of the richest professional development experiences of your educational careers. From early in my career, the annual AATSP conferences allowed me to recharge after a busy academic year. AATSP conferences helped me make invaluable connections with those who shared goals and circumstances and helped open my eyes to things that I had not heretofore considered. AATSP meets all over the world and throughout the United States, so makes plans to join us annually.

The lush and complex land of the Boriquas does not disappoint with its stunning sea views, emblematic beaches, tropical jungles, vibrant urban landscapes, ever-present music, not to mention the sound of the coqui and delicious local cuisine. On top of the sights, sounds, and smells lies the resilience of the Puerto Ricans. They are people that persevere in the wake of hurricanes (María, Irma, Gonzalo, Bertha, Hugo, etc.), pandemic lockdowns, a complicated colonial past, tricky political circumstances, and the legacy of being a slave trade hub. All these complexities are captured in Puerto Rican art, literature, and culture of canonized Puerto Rican artists and writers like Antonio Martorell along with emerging street muralists in Santurce. Indeed, life in paradise can be a double-edged sword.
In planning this event, I have been privileged to work with outstanding AATSP presidents. First, the gracious and learned Ada Ortúzar-Young was at the helm, but her presidential year in San Juan 2020 was not meant to be. In 2021, Maritza Sloan led the AATSP with wisdom, grace, and a singular focus on implementing our values of justice, equity, and access as we staged our first pandemic conference in Atlanta, Georgia. This year, your stellar President Rachel Mamiya Hernández brings her wit, intelligence, and her lived multicultural worldview to the AATSP. I am grateful for the collaboration and bounty of our presidents and past presidents. They leave their stamp on our collective efforts to be better educators, researchers, and administrators. You will meet these individuals in San Juan, and they want to meet you. I value them all and look forward to working with AATSP President Elect Parthena Draggett in the future.

So, with over 350 sessions, events, and workshops, there is something for everyone at our conference! You will find ideas that inspire and knowledge to add to your repertoire. You will exchange ideas and experiences in person with friends and colleagues who will become part of your permanent network of supporters and educators. Our annual conferences in the summer have been combined historically with vacation travel. I urge you to relax and learn. To quote Professor Donna Clark of Northern Virginia Community College, the AATSP conference offers “Spanish on Steroids” as well as a rich Portuguese experience. We focus on our target languages, and this makes the AATSP unique. Don’t miss out on the many special events too numerous to mention here like the Keynote Address by internationally recognized Dr. Maria Carreira. Recently featured on NPR, Dr. Carreira is a leading specialist on heritage language teaching and learning. Join us at the Opening Plenary with Kim Haas of Afro-Latino Travels and much, much more. I invite you to download the app or browse the program and plan your AATSP experience.

Muchos saludos,

Sheri Spaine Long, PhD
AATSP Executive Director